

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 198 814

IR 009 191

AUTHOR Laughlin, Mildred
TITLE Visual Literacy Through Picture Books K-12: A Curriculum Approach.
PUB DATE 26 Sep 80
NOTE 22p : Paper presented at the National Conference of the American Association of School Librarians (Louisville, KY, September 26, 1980).
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; *Curriculum Enrichment; Elementary Secondary Education; Media Specialists; *Picture Books; *Visual Literacy

ABSTRACT

An effective and easily overlooked resource for conducting visual literacy activities at the elementary secondary level is the picture book collection found in most elementary school libraries. In these times of inflated prices and budget reductions, K-12 librarians and teachers should not fail to make use of these materials. There are a variety of approaches to teaching visual literacy through the use of picture books. Story boards, photographs, hand games, filmmaking, and filmstrips can be used as supplementary materials for these activities. Among the authors whose works are particularly appropriate for visual literacy activities are David Macaulay, Jim Murphy, Tomie DePaola, Holling C. Holling, Jean Fritz, F. N. Monjo, and Barbara Cooney. Reading, English, and the total language arts program offer many opportunities for such activities, and projects related to the teaching of poetry can be very successful. The work of the following poets has been used effectively as the basis for visual literacy activities: Vachel Lindsay, Ernest Thayer, James Whitcomb Riley, Harry Behn, Robert Frost, William Wordsworth, Carl Sandburg, and Leo and Diane Dillon. (LIS)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED198814

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN-
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT
OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

VISUAL LITERACY THROUGH PICTURE BOOKS K-12:

A CURRICULUM APPROACH

by

Mildred Laughlin

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

~~Mildred Laughlin~~

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

IR009191

VISUAL LITERACY THROUGH PICTURE BOOKS K-12:

A CURRICULUM APPROACH

What are we media specialists doing to help our patrons "see"? What concrete steps are we taking to aid in visual literacy development within the school community we serve? These questions may appear inappropriate or even ridiculous, despite the fast-growing body of general educational literature that discusses the concept. However, because visual literacy discussions are often not related specifically to the media specialist's role, our contribution is not recognized or given a high priority. If media specialists were asked to document efforts to promote visual literacy, many could not instantly indicate evidence of activities designed to aid in developing visual literacy skills.

Perhaps we should stop for a moment and ask ourselves, "What does it mean to "see"? Is seeing different from looking, observing, or glancing? An attempt to explore synonyms for "see " and to identify unique aspects of each definition may be an approach to stimulating interest in further exploration of the concept.

At this point a definition of visual literacy may be helpful to insure a common frame of reference for our discussion of the way in which picture books may be utilized on a K-12 level in developing visual literacy competencies.

John Debes, in the October, 1969, Audiovisual Instruction suggested a definition of visual literacy that has gained substantial recognition.

Visual literacy refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visual actions, objects, and symbols, natural or human made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, he is able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication.'

Visual literacy involves the multitude of techniques by which people communicate with each other in non-verbal ways. This includes facial expressions as well as art forms, pantomime or film. Visual literacy skills should not be confined to those who can not learn in verbal ways. Neither is it appropriate only for those with unique artistic ability. Instead, it involves the capacity of each person to recognize, understand, discriminate between, interpret, appreciate, create, and communicate visual messages.

The tremendous force of photography and television in extending man's experiences makes it imperative that media specialists become more visually oriented, aware of their responsibility in developing a visually literate, critical community. Experiments in the impact of television reinforce the idea that viewers can become conditioned to violence. Could not there be similar conditioning in a media center program, designed to build an awareness of native beauty, an appreciation of the messages in a work of art, or a desire to express oneself in a slide or film sequence rather than a visual message.

Visual literacy activities are limited only by our own time and ingenuity. As I explore today the few ideas that time allows for picture book utilization in a variety of curriculum areas, I shall try to point out also the opportunities for rational power development to challenge us to provide experiences for developing the complex thinking skills of comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation through pleasurable activities.

The slides I am using to identify specific picture books do not do justice to the picture books themselves; but because of the extent of the audience I felt this approach would best serve our needs. I have tried to arrange visual literacy activities in curriculum areas, obviously overlapping but designed to demonstrate the vast potential for picture book use.

David Macaulay spent a week with our University of Oklahoma architectural engineering students, so I confidently placed his books at the top of my science list. His many books, Underground (Houghton, 1976), Pyramid (Houghton, 1975), Cathedral (Houghton, 1973), City (Houghton, 1974), and Unbuilding (Houghton, 1980) offer sophisticated architectural and scientific information useful from upper grades to adult, and his sense of humor and visual arts techniques

make each page in his books a challenge in "seeing". In Underground he takes us on a visual journey through the city's various support systems by exposing an intersection of two streets. Through numbered colored dots he presents a visual table of contents which identifies the topics which are given extended treatment and the page on which each detailed illustration and brief discussion will be found. Students would enjoy this approach as they put together a class project in social studies or a science area such as birds. Within the book a serious illustrated explanation of valves has an added humorous twist for the visually literate with the addition of a dog at the fire hydrant. In another sewer system drawing satisfied rats inhabit the manhole and an alligator is clearly visible to the alert observer. When sharing any information from Macaulay's books, students should be urged to record the humorous visual asides caught only by the careful observer.

Jim Murphy's Weird and Wacky Inventions (Crown, 1978) should spark the creative imagination of would be inventors. One's powers of observation are tested as he or she views inventions such as the one in which a choice is given among space helmet, vacuum device for relieving headaches, hair-cutting machine or stimulator for hair growth. A turned page reveals that it is John Boax's hair-cutting machine which used electric coils to burn the hair to the desired length. If shared with a group for the first time, students should be asked to document their choice by identifying the details that caused them to reach a decision.

In another illustration of an invention patented in 1854 the reader's choice is an ice cream maker, a washing machine, a Swiss cheese mold, or a paint mixer. A turned page reveals it is a washing machine, and the brief comment indicates that the weight of the water and clothes required a strong arm for effective use. The varied inventions recorded in this book should inspire creative class members to at least design the picture of a potentially useful 20th century household invention. After sharing their designs in class, the group can react to patent procedure and the chances for survival of each idea in a 20th century market. The ideas can then be combined in book form with the multiple choice approach and a brief description.

Tomie De Paola's Quicksand Book ^(Holiday, 1977, unp) is a clever natural science book which discusses the composition of sand and rescue procedure if caught in quicksand. It also contains a recipe for making your own quicksand. The cartoon illustrations lend humor, and the women have the last laugh, for after the boy disregards the immediacy of the girl's plea for assistance, she is able to react to his calls for "Help" with "Now, now. Remember what you told me! Just keep calm, lie on your back and float. I'll pull you out when I finish my tea." Perhaps this book will spark the creative genius of some upper grade or junior high student to combine science fact and imagination in a picture book creation. De Paola has a similar approach in his Popcorn Book (Holiday, 1978).

Quackenbush does not completely neglect his usual musical interest in his Along Came the Model T - of How Henry Ford Put the World on Wheels (Parents, 1978). After the reader is invited to sing the prologue to the tune of "Row, Row, Row the Boat," the brief text, enhanced by detailed illustrations usable on any level, shares the record of how Tin Lizzie became an important part of the American way of life. One illustration shows how a Brooklyn minister turned his Model T into a portable church. Young people may want to research information about the influence of some other aspect of the machine age on 20th century life. A 35mm camera may be used for copying old photos.

For students of any level who have not observed first hand the old locks and aqueducts of that 1825 engineering marvel, The Erie Canal, Peter Spier's illustrated version of the song The Erie Canal (Doubleday, 1970) is an enlightening visual experience.

A brief factual summary is also included, explaining how the boats passed each other without tangled towlines, why the low bridges mentioned in the song were constructed in that manner, cost, etc. Incidentally, passengers in 1835 paid 5¢ per mile, including meals.

The historical fiction works of Holling C. Holling are alive with visual facts. Full page color illustrations in his Tree in the Trail (Houghton, 1942) alternate with each written page, but more important, each page of text is bordered with factual informative illustrations of historical concepts about which a passing reference is made. On the text page "Rendezvous at Council Grove" a series of

drawings detail the steps in covered wagon construction. This bordered text format could provide the example to lead upper grade, junior high and senior high school students to create their own visual messages to enhance original short story or biographical accounts, thus sharpening their own skill in translating verbal to visual.

Holling C. Holling's humor, like that of Macaulay and de Paola, is evidenced in the subtle illustrations and in text. Jeb's note, placed in the post office tree records,

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Camped this date at Post Office Tree after good trip 20 days out. This season looks good. No bad storms coming this year. All men and animals well, but - the old tree is deader than a wheel spoke. Hoping you are the same I beg to remain.

Yours truly,
Jeb X Simpson 2

Denise Wilms in the 1978 Booklist states in her evaluation of biography that a disregard for quality stems from our concern for substance. She feels that more attention must be given to its crafting and to its total value as a rich, entertaining, educational medium.³ Young people should be trained to scrutinize text and illustrations for authenticity. Illustrations do much to help the reader answer the question "And Then What Happened" in Jean Fritz's And Then What Happened, Paul Revere.

Paul went into the tavern, had a bite to eat, found the trunk, and carried it out, holding one end while John Lowell held the other. As they stepped on the green, the troops appeared. And then what happened?⁴

The Kirkus tombstone inserted by Trina Shart Hyman in an illustration for the first edition of Fritz's Will You Sign Here, John Hancock (Coward, 1976) makes a personal statement about Kirkus' caustic reviews. The "nasty soul" inscription, Hyman's message to Kirkus, escaped early less visually literate reviewers. It should now be used to discuss appropriateness, effect on complete authenticity of Fritz's work, and the need for careful analysis of every detail. Although absolutely essential in biography, fiction illustrations also should accurately represent the times. For Barbara Cooney's

scratchboard illustrations for Chanticleer and the Fox (Crowell, 1958) she stated that even the herbs that grow near the house are typical of Chaucer's time and were observed first hand growing in her own garden.

Young people from upper grades through high school can be challenged to make a picture with one incongruous detail for others to find and then defend their challenge of inconsistency. Mitsumasa Anno's Topsy Turvies (Walker, 1970) can be used as an example of inconsistencies blended carefully into a wordless message for the visual reader to locate, thus stretching his/her imagination. In the ^{post-}script Anno stated that he purposely added no words to the topsy turvy pictures so you can make them mean whatever you want them to mean. He continues with "In Japan where this book was first published, many people have seen different things in these pictures. One professor of mathematics claims that in a single picture he has found twelve different 'impossibilities.' But is anything really impossible in the world of the imagination?"

His Anno's Journey (Collins-World, 1978) presents a visual account of the author's journey through Northern Europe and his impressions of the land and the people at work and play. The architecture of Northern Europe is presented in precisely blended watercolor, and the introduction to great European music, art, and folklore is surprisingly, skillfully blended. On one page you can find the folktale "The Enormous Turnip" as well as Don Quixote.

Yet, that is not all! The illustrations are alive with visual jokes, continuing tales within the tale, and puzzles of perspective. The background of experience needed to perceive the entire visual message makes this a masterpiece for junior/senior high. On another page the two men in the upper left corner are from a French painting and the man climbing to see the woman taking a bath in the lower left corner will find on the next page that she has disappeared.

The Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire's Caldecott winning biography Abraham Lincoln (Doubleday, 1939) also includes a visual challenge. When the stone lithography illustrations had to be re-done for a new edition, the d'Aulaires made a minor change on each page, detected only by the visually alert as they compare the 1939 and 1957 editions.

Oftentimes close attention to details in the authentic illustrations of biographies for young people reveal more of the character of the person about whom the biography is written than could be included in a text which recognizes the limited reading vocabulary of the user. Young people should be given the opportunity to compare the biographies of Abraham Lincoln illustrated by a variety of distinguished artists and document their observations of the specific personality traits thus evidenced. In F. N. Monjo's book, Me and Pa and Willie (Simon, 1973), written from Tad's point of view, Douglas Gorsline's illustrations clearly demonstrate that Pa indeed looked young and happy prior to the war but he looked sad and tired at its conclusion. Junior/senior high students familiar with Gorsline through American Heritage magazine will appreciate his interpretation of Lincoln in this young level book. Documented comparisons of illustrations in biographies utilize analysis, synthesis and evaluation skills, evidencing that visual activities also provide opportunities to develop the higher levels of rational powers identified in Bloom's taxonomy.

The Newbery and Caldecott winners for 1980 provide an exciting opportunity for visual literacy activities. Barbara Cooney's research before illustrating Ox-Cart Man (Viking, 1979), described for us in her acceptance speech, demonstrated the importance for the illustrator to establish exactly when a story could have happened. Even hairdos and beards must be considered. Using Ox-Cart Man with the Cooney speech (Top of the News, Summer, 1980, pp. 389-92) as a backdrop, why not inspire a social science/history class project of visually/verbally reconstructing a ghost town within your state. If that project seems too immense, utilize the overlay technique of the Encyclopedia Britannica study prints of Greece and Rome. Make the original picture be the ghost town or decaying local building as it now appears. On a transparency paint the town or building as it originally appeared and use as an overlay. This project requires the same degree of research analysis and synthesis, but on a smaller scale. On the back of the original picture brief description and documentation can be recorded.

It is interesting that Barbara Cooney set the year, 1832, for the Ox Cart Man's date in this story of pioneer New Hampshire. Joan Bloc also gives us 1832 New Hampshire in the Newbery Award Winner for 1980, A Gathering of Days (Scribners, 1979). Upper grade students could plan a series of pictures of events described, make and transfer

them to slide format and with a verbal rendition on tape, a slide-tape presentation could evolve. This activity is a sample of the kind of creative endeavor to which Janice Smith referred in her excellent overview of media services for gifted young people. She saw as one of our roles the encouragement of independent expression, utilizing a number of thinking processes in a creative product.⁵

The dignity of man and the unique worth of each individual can often be expressed in more meaningful fashion through illustration than by words. Peter Parnall's sensitive line drawings for Miska Miles Annie and the Old One (Little, 1971) demonstrate the dignity of the Navajo world. Use such simple picture books to begin a discussion of human values on any level. Taro Yashima's Crow Boy (Viking, 1955) delivers a visual message about Japanese village/school life and the teacher who believed in the worth and uniqueness of each individual. It has universal meaning. Use such picture books in fulfilling a stated objective of most social studies programs relating to human understanding. Robert Lawson's They Were Strong and Good (Viking, 1949), a Caldecott winner, gives a powerful visual message, yet needs to be discussed when used in classrooms because of two racist statements in the brief text. Certainly, the message of pride in ancestry is important.

The opportunities for utilization of picture books in the areas of reading, English and the total language arts program are so vast that we can only scratch the surface of visual ideas. May we begin with poetry?

At a conference for professors of children's literature in Waco, Texas, last spring, Myra Cohn Livingston, a modern poet, critic and teacher, followed an inspiring poetry lecture with a seminar the next day on techniques for use. At the close of that session I overheard two professors agreeing that they still didn't like poetry. Unfortunately, those two instructors will not be successful in inspiring their students, who are future teachers and librarians, to share poetry creatively and enthusiastically. The potential loss to countless young people is too staggering to contemplate.

Children do not initially dislike poetry. The distaste one may hear expressed by young people in junior/senior high school is imposed by adults who have not transmitted its wonder and kept the imagination

of young people attuned to poetry's vast potential for enjoyment and creative thought.

Begin with hand games on the kindergarten-first grade level. I used to teach my kindergarten and first grade class an appropriate hand game each week in the library. The hand movements should help them to be able to say the poem after you repeat it 3 times, as the visual image supplements the verbal to aid memory.

Of course, what you term appropriate may not always be received that way. One October, I enthusiastically shared

Way up high in the apple tree
Two little apples smiled at me.
I shook the tree as hard as I could
And down came the apples - um-m - were they good!

One little boy sat stoicly and did not participate even after all the others were repeating the lines with enthusiastic um-m - m-ms. I asked Jimmy why he wasn't sharing, & he stated emphatically, "I hate apples!"

One must be sure that the verbal message is received correctly as the visuals are easy to remember. A kindergarten group learned in our media center one day

A funny old woman in a painted hat
On my door went rap, rap, rap.
When I went to the door, she wasn't there;
She was riding a broomstick, high in the air.

The next day when the kindergarten teacher asked if anyone remembered the poem, a little boy waved his hand. When she asked him to share it, he said,

"A funny old woman in a painted hat
On my door went crap, crap, crap."

Children will enjoy making their own hand games and should receive your encouragement and assistance. They can be shared with others, and after appropriate directions are indicated, can be made into a book. The mere act of translating actions into words requires visual literacy skill.

Use gestures to assist in choral work. Vachel Lindsay's "The Mysterious Cat", found in Johnny Appleseed and Other Poems (Macmillan, 1930, p. 6) can be shared with no prior practice if you direct the audience to repeat back the line you just said whenever you point to them. Let your hand in flat position inspire the mew, mew, mew response. Let's try it!

Humor provides a good beginning on any level - and Shel Silverstein's Where the Sidewalk Ends (Harper, 1974) knows no age level. Who could fail to respond to

Hat

Teddy said it was a hat,
So I put it on,
Now Dad is saying,
"Where the heck's
the toilet plunger gone?" (p. 74)

Many of the poems in this collection are not illustrated and might provide a creative avenue for young people to find and picture in line drawing the central theme of one of their unillustrated favorites.

Just as the character of the man was captured in the illustrations of Abraham Lincoln mentioned earlier, the visual message of Ernest Thayer's narrative poem "Casey at the Bat" (Prentice, 1964, unp.) has been rendered by Paul Frame, and certainly illuminates the poem's meaning.

"They saw his face grow stern and cold,
They saw his muscles strain,
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let
The ball go by again."

Let young people this fall verbalize about Casey's character as evidenced in Frame's illustrations. Perhaps they can collect pictures of George Brett at bat and compare the character traits displayed by each as they approach the batter's box or respond to the pitches. This activity adds the dimension of comparison and decision making to the verbal from visual translation.

Elementary children will enjoy making a choral of Little Orphan Annie. As a Halloween activity, share James Whitcomb Riley's The Gobble-uns'll Git You Ef You Don't Watch Out, illustrated by Joel Schick (Lippincott, 1975) and have them discuss the goblin illustrations. They will enjoy illustrating their own goblins on transparencies and as each verse is presented with the familiar refrain, flash the class goblins on the screen for an illustration to back-drop the words of the chorus.

Harry Behn in Chrysalis summarizes the need to select carefully the poetry we share with young people. He observes, "Some years ago when poetry had become what the critics were prescribing - an intellectual game, pretentious, dull, doleful, and obscure - I chose to write for children, lamenting that poets who write for each other were understandable only to poets who wrote for each other."⁶

We as librarians and teachers contribute to young people's dislike instead of enjoyment of poetry by choosing poems with elusive meanings, then providing no enjoyable sharing activity that will illuminate the theme. The love of poetry, like that of classical music, is developed through a multitude of varied experiences, beginning at the young person's level of interest. Unless high school students have had countless opportunities to enjoy good poetry in their elementary/junior high years, they can not be expected to find immediate meaning and pleasure from poets such as Frost or Wordsworth.

If a teacher wishes to introduce Frost to junior or senior high school students inexperienced with poetry, then he or she would do well to select Ann Jeffers illustrated version of Robert Frost's Stopping in the Woods on a Snowy Evening (Dutton, 1978) as an introduction to his works. Jeffers is quoted on the dust jacket thus, "I wanted to put my pictures to Frost's magical and mysterious poem in the same way that a person wants to dance to an irresistible piece of music." As the user scrutinizes the illustrations, she or he discovers Jeffers' interpretation of "the promises to keep" suggested in Frost's lines to be that of delivering gifts. What other visual interpretation would have been equally appropriate? Research Frost's life, listen to his explanation of the poem as recorded on the Caedmon disc Robert Frost Reads His Poetry, and see if

Frost's meaning for those lines might have been different from the Jeffers interpretation which for some gives a Christmas feeling to the poem.

An effective introduction to William Wordsworth could be Lucy Gray or Solitude as it was illustrated by Gilbert Riswold (Prentice, 1964, unp.). Wordsworth's explanation of the poem provides a background for analyzing the effectiveness of Griswold's illustrations in illuminating the theme of the poem. The fly-leaf records Wordsworth's 1799 note, "Written at Goslar in Germany. It was founded on a circumstance told me by my Sister, of a little girl who, not far from Halifax in Yorkshire, was bewildered in a snow storm." There are many concepts to discuss relating to the illustrations after they are shared. Why the choice of blue, why the raven featured so prominently for the poem's first lines? Does the hand lettering by Margaret Griswold, the wife of the illustrator, contribute to one's visual satisfaction with the result? What mood is created? What feelings of the parents are evidenced on their faces? A shared discussion could well inspire committees or individuals to select a ballad or narrative poem to illustrate. If art talent is lacking, a story-board which identifies details will suffice as it also demands visual planning and translation.

At Kennedy School in Norman, Oklahoma, we tried another use of a story board with poetry and the results were effective. A fifth grade class found two of Sandburg's poems included in the reading text. A committee chose to explore his poems in the media center and share with the class. They read Wind Song (Harcourt, 1960) and Early Moon (Harcourt, 1930), sought his poems in anthologies, listened to a recording, and read about his life to understand more fully the experiences that he translated into poetry. They chose eighteen poems for sharing, discussed the central theme of each, and after storyboarding an illustration of each theme drew their ideas on blank film. The poems were dittoed and made into small books for each class member with the story board sketch for each poem on the upper corner of the page. I supposed they would share the filmstrip and read each poem. Instead, they distributed the books with this approach, "We have made a filmstrip frame for the theme of each poem. As soon as it appears on the screen, try to find the poem in your book. The first one who finds it gets to read the poem." The enthusiasm with which Carl Sandburg's poems were read that day by

students who would never have volunteered to read a poem was full assurance of the success of the visual project.

Concrete poetry allows a different form of visual extension not dependent on talent in painting or drawing. Robert Froman, author of Seeing Things (Crowell, 1974) says, "A seeing poem happens when words take a shape that helps them to turn on a light in someone's mind." In his "Dead Tree" one visualizes it standing bare & alone through the starkness of the typed message in the shape of a tree stripped of branches.

After students share other poems in Seeing Things and search anthologies for examples of concrete poetry by Myra Livingston and others, they will be ready to try either hand lettering or typing their own creations in a visually accurate portrayal.

The imagery of poetry speaks to the imagination through simile and metaphor. Leo and Diane Dillon have interpreted Belting's moving collection of Native American poems, Whirlwind is a Ghost Dancing (Dutton, 1974, unp). Here is their interpretation of the Dakota Indian poem

Wind is a ghost
That whirls and turns,
Twists in fleet moccasins,
Sweeps up dust, spinning
Across the dry flatlands.

The Dillons drew upon research materials to create the decorative motifs of the Indian Nations and translated their findings into full-color art, drawn with pastels and acrylics in combination with a glaze.

Students could also respond to the free-flowing poetic imagery of this work in ballet movements, translating their personal mood upon hearing the poem into the dance as a visual art form.

Byrd Baylor feels that dancing can be a way of talking, because a dance can say anything. In her Sometimes I Dance Mountains (Scribners, 1973, unp.) a young dancer is photographed, thus inviting her audience to join her. "Sometimes I dance mountains and whirlwinds, and I even dance bugs... (or) a dance made out of sorrows that you can never say in words." She closes with "I dance my way. Now it's

your turn. What's your way?" Perhaps the students will translate their dance into words - and photographs.

Marcia Brown also chose photographs to help her audience Listen to the Shape (Watts, 1979, unp.).

Some shapes say,
"We look like something else.
We want to join your zoo!"

Here a fox is hunting
a water bird.
When will
he catch it?

She adds, "You can make them both with your fingers." Listen to a Shape closes with

Take these shapes
You can feel
What they say,
They don't lie.
You can dance with them.
They are in your world
They are in you.

Take your students on a walk with a camera. Later, let them translate the shapes that they thus recorded into a dance or into haiku like that created by Ann Atwood, who shared her Haiku-Vision (Scribners, 1977, unp.).

"A meadow sculpture
Girl on an ivory stallion
Carved by a camera"

Marcia Brown also admonishes the reader to Walk With Your Eyes (Watts, 1979, unp.). In this imaginative photographic essay designed to encourage one to carefully observe nature, you can "grin right back at a water monster" or "stre-e-etch your brand-new leaf wings and take off on the first wind." Again, this is an invitation to the dance.

Marcia Brown's suggestion from Listen to the Shape to make the fox and waterbird with your fingers leads us to hand talk as a visual literacy medium.

Here also the picture book can guide us. Remy Charlip, in the forward of Hand Talk (Parents, 1974) shares the thought that you don't have to use your voice in order to talk. You can communicate with your eyes, face, hands, and body. This book through photographs shares 2 ways to talk with your hands: (1) Finger spelling, achieved by framing words, letter by letter, with the fingers of one hand, and (2) signing - making a picture or sign with one or two hands for each word or idea. In addition to providing an intriguing visual mode for upper grade students to express themselves to friends, it should have a spin-off influence on the attitudes of young people to those who are aurally handicapped. Charlip closes the forward with the suggestion that if the readers want to learn more handtalk, they should ask a deaf person adept in sign language to help them.

Film provides an effective medium for expressing oneself without words. As a prologue for creating their own 8 mm films high school film classes would profit from sharing Pat Hutchin's wordless picture book Changes, Changes (Macmillan, 1971); seeing the Weston Woods film of that book, and then the segment from Weston Woods film, Gene Deitch, the Picture Book Animated which explains aspects of Changes, Changes film production. An equally valuable exercise in visual literacy for them would be the sharing of Maurice Sendak's picture book, Where the Wild Things Are (Harper, 1963), then viewing the Weston Woods film of that book, and again, the excerpt from Gene Deitch, the Picture Book Animated which explains the problems in producing this "Mr. Everest of picture books." This process would inspire a profitable critical evaluation of the Weston Woods interpretations as well as giving valuable insights into a sophisticated film technique.

Rebecca Lukens in A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature discusses elements common to all imaginative literature: character, plot, setting, point of view, style, tone and theme. She illustrates the meaning of these terms and the ideas they represent with examples from children's books. Because these elements are the critical tools and basic vocabulary we use in evaluating any piece of imaginative literature on any level, it seems obvious that upper grade, junior and senior high school English teachers could profit from sharing pic-

ture books to create a quick, common experience for the students who may feel these concepts are elusive.

Lukens points out that one of the amazing insights about character in fiction is that a round character can be found in a short story for a small child. Text and delicately detailed illustration record the character of Peter Rabbit in Beatrix Potter's Tale of Peter Rabbit (Warne, 1902). Peter is a universal child and one never tires of rereading the book. Peter's actions as portrayed are intrinsic to his personality. Contrast Peter with Lois Lenski's Cowboy Small (Oxford, 1949). No suspenseful action aids remembering, and the round-faced nameless expressionless figure reveals no unforgettable character traits.⁷

Plot includes not only a sequence of events but also conflict. Again, Evaline Ness' illustrations of Samantha in Sam, Bangs and Moonshine (Holt, 1966) evidence the personal tensions with which Sam wrestles as she learns for herself the difference between good and bad moonshine.

Setting was certainly the antagonist in Peter Spier's Noah's Ark (Doubleday, 1977) and he needed no words to deliver the message of the difficulties encountered with animal and man spending 40 days and nights in cramped quarters. The illustrations are alive with details of these problems for the trained eye to notice.

Traditional literature is an excellent source for first experiences in theme, as it is usually clearly identified. Uri Shulavitz uses very little text in The Treasure (Farrar, 1978), yet his illustrations deliver the message as appropriately as did Ruth Sawyer in her longer, unillustrated version of the same tale, "The Peddler of Ballahagareen" (Fenner, Phyllis. Feasts and Frolics, Knopf, 1960, pp. 122-29); where imaginative text creates word pictures. Upper grade students would profit from comparing the two. A satisfying project would be the selection of other tales, and the isolation of the necessary text which, with detailed illustrations, would illuminate the theme.

The first person point of view is effectively presented in Dr. Seuss' And to Think I Saw It On Mulberry Street (Vanguard, 1937).

Obviously the fantastic parade was created by the imagination of the hero.

Compare this with Beatrice DeRegniers' May I Bring a Friend (Atheneum, 1965). The title suggests the point of view, yet the reader must rely on Beni Montresor's illustrations to express fully the first person approach.

Sound and rhythm are an aspect of style, and even here, all would agree that the rhythmic device in Wanda Gag's Millions of Cats (Coward, 1928, unp.)

Cats here, cats there
Cats and kittens everywhere.
Hundreds of cats
Thousands of cats
Millions and billions and trillions of cats

is made more meaningful by Gag's hill of cats, for few of us have the power to imagine millions of cats without visual assistance.

Among all the elements, tone is probably the hardest to define. Tone tells us how the author feels about the subject and the readers. Tone can be created by the author's choice of words and by illustrations. Compare the illustrated versions of Cinderella by Marcia Brown (Scribner, 1954) and Paul Galdone's Cinderella (McGraw, 1978). In each case how are the characters' attitudes toward each other revealed? Are the endings the same? Does that evidence a different attitude of the two authors toward the story? Compare these two with other versions.

Many junior and senior high students will enjoy comparing the tone of Beauty and the Beast illustrated by Mercer Mayer (Four Winds, 1978) where text and illustration identify that all the daughters except Beauty complained loudly, and later the sensitivity of Beauty as she knelt beside Beast, cradling him in her arms with that sensed in Robin McKinley's Beauty (Harper, 1978), the retelling of the story of Beauty and the Beast into a love story novel. Is the tone of the novel version the same as that of the Mayer rendition? Do the Mayer illustrations influence the tone? In what ways would illustrations for Beauty differ?

Prime examples of format variation and impact can be found in picture books - from the varied shapes of books such as Janice Udry's Tree is Nice (Harper, 1956) and Sendak's Nutshell Library (Harper, 1962) to Tana Hoban's hole in the page to invite you to Look Again (Macmillan, 1971) before you turn the page to try to guess the whole object, to Eric Carle's hole in the page of The Very Hungry Caterpillar (World, 1969) to demonstrate visually the eating of fruit, foreshadowing the caterpillar's amazing change in size on a subsequent page. Students may want to try their hand at a unique format technique that extends the meaning of the work.

No curriculum discussion would be complete without a brief mention of the value of picture books in illuminating an understanding of an artists' use of specific mediums and techniques to deliver the intended message. Compare the use of watercolor by Berta and Elmer Hader in The Big Snow (Macmillan, 1948) and Alois Cariget in Selina Chonz's A Bell for Ursli (Walck, 1950); gouache by Leonard Weisgard in Golden MacDonald's The Little Island (Doubleday, 1946) and Roger Duvoisin in Alvin Tresselt's Hide and Seek Fog (Lothrop, 1969); tempera by Leo Politi in Song of the Swallows (Scribners, 1948) and Nicolas Sidjakov in Ruth Robbin's Baboushka and the Three Kings (Parnassus, 1960); woodcuts by Ed Emberly in Drummer Hoff (Prentice, 1967) and Evalyn Ness in Tom Tit Tot (Scribners, 1965); the scratch-board by Barbara Cooney in Chanticleer and the Fox (Crowell, 1958) and Leonard Fisher in The Silversmiths (Watts, 1964), the stone lithography by the d'Aulaires in Abraham Lincoln (Doubleday, 1939) and Felix Hoffman in Rapunzel (Harcourt, 1961); or the paper cutting technique demonstrated by Ed Young in Emperor and the Kite (World, 1967) and Cheng How'tien's Six Chinese Brothers (Holt, 1979). The comparison of illustrations need not be limited to art teachers. If you lack expertise in styles and techniques, consult Patricia Cianciolo's excellent work, Illustrations in Children's Books (Wm Brown, 1976).

Valuable information for all grade levels can be found in the sound filmstrip signature collection by Weston Woods. Gail Haley shares print-making techniques in book illustration in her Wood and Linoleum Illustration. Steven Kellogg explains the making of The Island of Skog in How a Picture Book is Made. Gerald McDermott's Evaluation of a Graphic highlights the design decisions in The Stonecutter. Gene Deitch's Animating Strega Nonna

presents the challenge of adapting Tomie de Paola's book. Become acquainted with and use these valuable visual literacy tools.

Incidentally, upper level students should compare the illustrations of Cheng How-tiens Six Chinese Brothers published in 1979 with those illustrated by Kurt Wiese for Claire Bishop's Five Chinese Brothers (Coward, 1938). Will Six Chinese Brothers escape the censorship leveled at Five Chinese Brothers?

While comparing the need for the elaborate collage of Ezra Jack Keats for Jennie's Hat (Harper, 1966) with the simple collage in Frederick (Pantheon, 1967), do not neglect on the upper grade, junior high/senior high level an examination of all Lionni's picture books to enhance an understanding of biographical criticism. In Agree's article "Lionni's Artichokes: An Interview",

Lionni explains the motive for many of his works.

I once made a little exercise - I figured out that my books really make an autobiography - Inch by Inch was my life in advertising. When I had to make a living, I had to survive and I really made a living telling people things that they didn't need to know. That's what the inchworm did and he managed, very cleverly, to survive.

Then came Swimmy which was a period when I became very involved in politics and the role of the artist in politics. I didn't think it was enough to be an artist - I had to be a protest painter - I felt I had to act politically too.... that the artist is a man like other men with the same responsibilities. But when the time comes, the artist must realize he has a specific function to perform - he is the eye - not the body.

Then came a period when, I must admit, I had had it. I became more introspective and began to feel that, after all, as an artist, you're really justified enough. Maybe you should, for a while, concentrate on that. You perform a function in society even if it does not acutally involve running about in the streets with a flag in your hand. That was the period of Frederick.⁸

Examine the picture books Lionni mentioned and discuss the personal insight into Lionni's personality reflected in each. Now share Pezzettino (Pantheon, 1975, unp.) "He was small and surely must be a little piece of somebody else. He often wondered whose little piece he could be, and one day he decided to find out." At the end, all of his friends wanted to greet him. "I am myself! he shouted, full of joy."

Examine the sequence of Lionni's works since 1970, and through personal insight into Lionni's personality thus derived, discuss the illustrations in Pezzettino and the others and decide the personal motive for each work.

There is no doubt that picture books "know no level," easily documented by the recent best seller Faeries (Abrams, 1978) by Brian Froud and Allen Lee. Visual literacy should be a curriculum component at all levels if we are to prepare students to deal effectively with and correctly interpret the increasing amount of visual messages they receive daily. Hopefully, if it is wisely and creatively presented, this literacy will enrich their human experience.

I have mentioned only a few of countless approaches to using picture books in visual literacy activities at all levels. Maxine Green points out that among the fruits of aesthetic encounters are wonder, astonishment, and vision. "A unique aspect of the library," she asserts, "is that its resources are susceptible to almost infinite permutations and combinations."⁹

How true! And in these times of inflated prices and budget reductions, let us not fail to recognize the kindergarten through twelfth grade potential for visual literacy development that is found in the "art gallery" easy section of almost every elementary school library.

1. Debes, John L. "The Loom of Visual Literacy: An Overview," Audiovisual Instruction 14 (October 1969): 25-27.
2. Holling, Holling C. Tree in the Trail. Houghton, 1942, unp.
3. Wilms, Denise, "An Evaluation of Biography," Booklist (September 14, 1978): 218.
4. Fritz, Jean. And Then What Happened, Paul Revere. Coward, 1973, pp. 52-53.
5. Smith, Janice, "Media Services for Gifted Students: An Overview," School Media Quarterly 8 (Spring 1980): 167.
6. Behn, Harry. Chrysalis. Harcourt, 1968, p. 31.
7. Lukens, Rebecca. A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature. Scott F., 1976, pp. 22-23.
8. Agree, Rose, "Lionni's Artichokes: An Interview," Wilson Library Bulletin 44 (May, 1970): 947.
9. Greene, Maxine, "Media and Multiple Realities," School Media Quarterly 4 (Summer 1976): 303.